

Sleep Disturbances in Children

Sleep problems, notably those with disordered breathing, may be associated with daytime sleepiness, inattentive and hyperactive behavior, impaired cognitive function, learning disabilities or emotional lability. To assess the frequency of sleep-related problems a validated Pediatric Sleep Questionnaire was administered to 1,200 parents and children (aged 2.0–13.9 years), while they waited for a general pediatrics appointment [1]. 1038 questionnaires were completed. The relative frequency of various sleep-associated

problems in that group of children is given in the table. In addition, habitual snoring, defined as snoring more than half the time while asleep, was reported in 17.1% of the children. Sleep-disordered breathing was more common in overweight children (26.4%) than in children with normal weight (10.2%).

Comment: Questionnaires administered to troubled mothers sitting in the waiting room of a pediatric practice may not be the ideal tool to establish the true incidence of sleep problems in children, and the clinical significance of items such as 'bedtime resistance', 'bruxism' or 'sleep terror' is doubtful. However, it is good to remember that daytime

behavioral problems may stem from sleepless nights. In particular, inattention and hyperactivity have been associated with symptoms of sleep-disordered breathing [2]. Check for snoring before prescribing Ritalin.

Literature

1. Archbold KH, Pituch KJ, Panahi P, Chervin RD (2002) Symptoms of sleep disturbances among children at two general pediatric clinics. *J Pediatr* 140: 97–102
2. Chervin RD, Archbold KH, Dillon JE et al (2002) Inattention, hyperactivity, and symptoms of sleep-disordered breathing. *Pediatrics* 109: 449–456

JWS

Table Relative frequency (%) of sleep problems in children attending general pediatric clinics

Sleep Problem	Preschool Children N = 399	School Children N = 639
Sleep-disordered breathing	8.3	12.8
Excessive daytime sleepiness	10.6	18.8
Sleep walking	9.0	18.4
Sleep terrors	39.1	19.2
Nocturnal bruxism	31.6	27.2
≥2 insomnia symptoms	20.6	17.1
Bedtime resistance	29.3	22.7